

But beautiful Urmi, far as the eye can reach, is one oasis. From Turkman onwards the plain becomes more and more attractive, the wood-embosomed villages closer together, the variety of trees greater. Irrigation canals shaded by fruit trees, and irrigation ditches bordered by reeds, carry water in abundance all through the plain. Swampy streams abound. Fair stretches of smooth green sward rejoice the eye. Big buffaloes draw heavy carts laden with the teeming produce of the black, slimy, bountiful soil from the fields into the villages. Wheat, maize, beans, melons, gourds, potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, capsicum, chilis, *Iringals*, lady's fingers, castor-oil (for burning), cotton, madder, salsify, scorzonera, celery, oil-seeds of various sorts, opium, and tobacco all flourish. The orchards are full of trees which almost merit the epithet noble. Noble indeed are the walnuts, and beautiful are the pomegranates, the apricots, the apples, the peach and plum trees, and glorious are the vineyards with their foliage, which, like that of the cherry and pear, is passing away in scarlet and gold. Nature has perfected her work and rests. It is autumn in its glories, but without its gloom.

Men, women, and children are all busy. Here the wine-press is at work, there girls are laying clusters of grapes on terraces prepared for the purpose, to dry for raisins; women<sup>1</sup> are gathering cotton and castor-oil seeds, little boys are taking buffaloes to bathe, men are driving and loading buffalo-carts, herding mares,

ploughing  
and trenching, and in the innumerable  
villages the store-  
houses are being filled; the herbs and chilis  
are hanging  
from the roofs to dry, the women are making  
large cakes  
of animal fuel (of which they have sufficient  
for export),  
and are building it into great conical stacks,  
the crones  
are spinning in the sun, and the swaddled  
infants bound

<sup>1</sup> Christian women and girls share the work of the  
fields with the men.